

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for use in marketing comprising:
detecting, at the point-of-sale, a plurality of
Uniform Product Codes associated with respective items
5 purchased by a customer; and

transmitting, on a substantially real-time basis, the
plurality of Uniform Product Codes over the Internet to a
remote computer connected to the Internet.

10 2. The method of Claim 1, and further comprising
receiving, at the point-of-sale, a plurality of signals
indicative of the prices of the items.

15 3. The method of Claim 1, and further comprising
receiving, at the point-of-sale, from the remote computer
an advertisement message for receipt by the customer and
communicating the advertisement message to the customer.

20 4. The method of Claim 3, wherein communicating the
advertisement message to the customer comprises printing an
advertisement message on a customer receipt.

25 5. The method of Claim 1, wherein receiving, at the
point-of-sale, a plurality of Uniform Product Codes
comprises receiving at an electronic cash register, at the
point-of-sale, a plurality of Uniform Product Codes.

6. The method of Claim 5, wherein receiving, at the point-of-sale, a plurality of Uniform Product Codes comprises receiving, at a wedge disposed between a cash register and a scanner for scanning the respective items, at the point-of-sale, a plurality of Uniform Product Codes.

7. The method of Claim 1, and further comprising transmitting the plurality of Uniform Product Codes from the point-of-sale to a router associated with a plurality of points-of-sale, and wherein transmitting, on a substantially real-time basis, the plurality of Uniform Product Codes over the Internet to a remote computer connected to the Internet comprises transmitting, from the router, on a substantially real-time basis, the plurality of Uniform Product Codes over the Internet to a remote computer connected to the Internet.

8. The method of Claim 1, and further comprising transmitting, on a substantially real-time basis, the plurality of Uniform Product Codes to an incentive controller connected to the point-of-sale, and wherein transmitting, on a substantially real-time basis, the plurality of Uniform Product Codes over the Internet to a remote computer connected to the Internet comprises transmitting, from the incentive controller, on a substantially real-time basis, the plurality of Uniform Product Codes over the Internet to a remote computer connected to the Internet.

9. The method of Claim 1, and further comprising transmitting, on a substantially real-time basis, the plurality of Uniform Product Codes to a register controller connected to the point-of-sale, and wherein transmitting, on a substantially real-time basis the plurality of Uniform Product Codes over the Internet comprises transmitting, from the register controller, on a substantially real-time basis, the plurality of Uniform Product Codes over the Internet to a remote computer connected to the Internet.

10. The method of Claim 1, and further comprising transmitting, on a substantially real-time basis, the plurality of Uniform Product Codes from the remote computer connected to the Internet to a computer accessible by the manufacturer of a product associated with at least one of the Uniform Product Codes.

11. The method of Claim 10, wherein the computer accessible by the manufacturer is connected to the Internet.

12. The method of Claim 10, and further comprising transmitting, on a substantially real-time basis, data from the computer accessible by the manufacturer to the point-of-sale.

13. The method of Claim 12, wherein the data transmitted from the computer accessible by the manufacturer to the point-of-sale comprises transmitting, on a substantially real-time basis, the data through the remote computer to the point-of-sale.

14. The method of Claim 12, wherein transmitting, on a substantially real-time basis, the data to the point-of-sale comprises transmitting, on a substantially real-time basis, data associated with an incentive for a customer at the point-of-sale.

15. The method of Claim 14, wherein transmitting, on a substantially real-time basis, data associated with an incentive for a customer at the point-of-sale comprises transmitting, on a substantially real-time basis, data associated with an incentive for the customer at the point-of-sale in response to receiving, at the computer accessible by the manufacturer, Uniform Product Codes associated with respective items purchased by the customer.

16. A system for use in marketing comprising:

a scanner for reading Uniform Product Codes of items presented at the point-of-sale of a retail store;

an electronic cash register in communication with the scanner and operable to receive the Uniform Product Codes; and

a communication link providing data representative of the Uniform Product Codes on a substantially real-time basis to the Internet.

17. The system of Claim 16, and further comprising a printer for printing information associated with the items.

18. The system of Claim 16, and further comprising a computer connected to the Internet and located remote from the retail store for receiving the provided Uniform Product Codes.

19. The system of Claim 18, wherein the computer is operable to communicate on a substantially real-time basis the Uniform Product Codes to a client.

20. The system of Claim 19, wherein the client is a product manufacturer.

21. The system of Claim 19, wherein the client is a retailer.

22. The system of Claim 16, wherein the communication link comprises a wedge disposed between the scanner and the electronic cash register.

23. The system of Claim 16, wherein the communication link comprises a first end and a second end, the first end disposed between the scanner and the electronic cash register and the second end connected to the Internet.

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24. The system of Claim 23, wherein the communication link comprises a wedge disposed between the scanner and the electronic cash register.

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25. The system of Claim 16, wherein the communication link comprises a router coupled to the point-of-sale.

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26. The system of Claim 16, wherein the communication link comprises a router and an associated connection between the router and the point-of-sale.

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27. The system of Claim 16, wherein the communication link comprises an incentive controller coupled to the point-of-sale.

28. The system of Claim 16, wherein the communication link comprises a register local area network.

29. The system of Claim 16, wherein the communication link comprises a register controller coupled to the point-of-sale.

30. The system of Claim 16, wherein the communication link comprises a unit connected to the point-of-sale, the unit selected from the group consisting of a router, an incentive controller, and a register controller.

31. A system for use in marketing, the system comprising:

an electronic cash register for processing items at the point-of-sale;

5 a computer remote from the point-of-sale and connected to the Internet; and

a substantially real-time communication link operable to carry information associated with the items from the point-of-sale to the Internet on a substantially real-time basis for receipt by the computer.

32. The system of Claim 31, and further comprising a printer for printing information concerning the processed items.

33. The system of Claim 32, wherein the substantially real-time communication link is further operable to carry information from the Internet on a substantially real-time basis to the point-of-sale.

34. The system of Claim 33, wherein the substantially real-time communication link is connected to the printer.

35. The system of Claim 31, wherein the substantially real-time communication link is further operable to carry information from the Internet on a substantially real-time basis to the point-of-sale.

36. The system of Claim 31, and further comprising a router coupled to the point-of-sale.

37. The system of Claim 31, and further comprising an incentive controller coupled to the point-of-sale.

5 38. The system of Claim 31, wherein the communication link comprises a register local area network.

10 39. The system of Claim 31, and further comprising a scanner for scanning Uniform Product Codes of the items and wherein the communication link comprises a wedge disposed between the electronic cash register and the scanner.

40. The system of Claim 39, wherein the wedge comprises an RS-232 Y-connector.

41. A method for use in advertising, the method comprising:

receiving, at the point-of-sale, Uniform Product Codes associated with items presented at the point-of-sale; and

5 transmitting, without manipulation, the Uniform Product Codes over the Internet to a computer remote from the point-of-sale.

42. A method for use in advertising, the method comprising:

receiving, at a computer through the Internet, substantially real-time product purchase information for products purchased at a retail store; and

providing, by a computer, the product purchase information associated with only particular products of the purchased products to a client, the particular products associated with the client.

43. The method of Claim 42, wherein receiving, at a computer through the Internet, substantially real-time product purchase information comprises receiving Uniform Product Codes for the products purchased at the retail store.

44. The method of Claim 43, wherein providing, by a computer, the product purchase information associated with only particular products of the purchased products comprises providing, by a computer, product purchase information associated with products that are competitive to products manufactured by the client.

45. The method of Claim 43, wherein providing, by a computer, the product purchase information associated with only particular products of the purchased products comprises providing, by a computer, the Uniform Product Codes associated with products manufactured by the manufacturer.

46. The method of Claim 42, wherein receiving, at a computer through the Internet, substantially real-time product purchase information comprises receiving, at a computer through the Internet, Uniform Product Codes associated with purchased products and the prices at which the products were purchased.

47. The method of Claim 46, wherein providing, by a computer, the product purchase information comprises providing, by a computer, the Uniform Product Codes for products manufactured by the client and the prices of the purchased products that are manufactured by the client.

48. The method of Claim 46, wherein providing, by a computer, the product purchase information comprises providing, by a computer, the Uniform Product Codes for purchased products that are competitive to products manufactured by the client and providing the prices at which the products competitive to the manufacturer were purchased.

49. A method of use in advertising comprising:

detecting, at a computer through the Internet, a plurality of incentives to be communicated to a plurality of customers;

5 compiling, by the computer, all incentives associated with respective customers into a single document; and
 communicating the single document to the respective customer.

10 50. The method of Claim 49, wherein detecting, at a computer through the Internet, a plurality of incentives to be communicated to a plurality of customers comprises detecting, at a computer operable to receive substantially real-time product purchase information over the Internet.

15 51. The method of Claim 49, wherein detecting, at a computer through the Internet, a plurality of incentives comprises detecting, at a computer through the Internet, a plurality of electronic mail messages.

20 52. The method of Claim 49, wherein compiling, by the computer, all incentives associated with respective customers into a single document comprises compiling, by the computer, a plurality of electronic mail messages
25 associated with respective customers into a single electronic mail message.

53. The method of Claim 49, wherein detecting, at a computer through the Internet, a plurality of incentives to be communicated to a plurality of customers comprises detecting, at a computer through the Internet, a plurality
5 of incentives associated with respective customer identification numbers that are representative of the identity of respective customers, and wherein compiling, by the computer, all incentives associated with respective customers into a single document comprises compiling, by
10 the computer, all incentives associated with a particular customer identification number.

54. The method of Claim 49, wherein communicating the single document to the respective customer comprises
15 transmitting an electronic mail message to the respective customer.

55. The method of Claim 49, wherein communicating the single document comprises communicating the single document
20 to a point-of-sale.

56. The method of Claim 55, wherein communicating the single document to the respective customer comprises
25 printing the single document on a customer receipt located at the point-of-sale.

57. The method of Claim 49, and further comprising receiving a plurality of shopping lists for a plurality of respective customers, and transmitting data representative of at least one item on the shopping list to a product manufacturer prior to receiving the plurality of incentives.

58. The method of Claim 49, wherein compiling, by the computer, all incentives associated with respective customers into a single document comprises compiling, by the computer a plurality of incentives associated with competing products.

59. A method for use in marketing, the method comprising:

receiving, at a computer on a substantially real-time basis, signals indicative of product purchase information for a plurality of products purchased from a retail store;

comparing, by the computer, the product purchase information to a desired product purchase criteria to determine whether the desired product purchase criteria is achieved; and

in response to the determination, communicating to the retail store a price variation for the at least one product.

60. The method of Claim 59, wherein receiving signals indicative of product purchase information comprises receiving Uniform Product Codes of purchased products of a particular manufacturer.

61. The method of Claim 60, wherein receiving signals indicative of product purchase information comprises receiving Uniform Product Codes for competing products of products of a particular manufacturer.

62. The method of Claim 59, wherein the desired product purchase criteria comprises a predetermined market share of a particular product.

63. The method of Claim 59, wherein the desired product purchase criteria comprises a predetermined change in market share of a particular product.

64. The method of Claim 59, wherein receiving, at a computer on a substantially real-time basis, signals indicative of product purchase information comprises receiving, at a computer on a substantially real-time basis, signals indicative of product purchase information through the Internet.

65. The method of Claim 59, wherein communicating to the retail store a price variation comprises communicating the price variation through the Internet to the retail store.

66. The method of Claim 64, wherein communicating to the retail store a price variation comprises communicating the price variation to an electronic shelf tag located in the retail store.

67. The method of Claim 59, wherein receiving, at a computer on a substantially real-time basis, signals indicative of product purchase information comprises receiving signals indicative of product purchase information at a remote computer connected to the retail store through the Internet, the remote computer located remote from the retail store.

68. The method of Claim 59, wherein receiving, at a computer on a substantially real-time basis, the signals indicative of product purchase information includes receiving signals indicative of the prices of purchased products.

69. The method of Claim 59, wherein receiving signals indicative of product purchase information comprises receiving signals indicative of the identities of a plurality of purchased products.

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70. The method of Claim 59, wherein receiving, at a computer on a substantially real-time basis, signals indicative of product purchase information comprises receiving, at a computer accessible by a product manufacturer on a substantially real-time basis, signals indicative of product purchase information of products manufactured by the manufacturer.

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71. A method for use in marketing, the method comprising:

receiving, at a remote location through the Internet,
substantially real-time product purchase information from
a retail store in conjunction with an identification code
of a customer purchasing the products;

determining at the remote location an incentive to be
communicated to the identified customer; and

communicating data relative to the incentive to the
identified customer at the point-of-sale.

72. The method of Claim 71, wherein determining at
the remote location an incentive to be communicated to the
identified customer comprises determining an incentive
based upon the product purchased information.

73. The method of Claim 71, wherein determining at
the remote location an incentive to be communicated to the
identified customer comprises determining an incentive
based on information independent of the product purchase
information.

74. The method of Claim 72, wherein determining an
incentive further comprises determining the incentive based
on past purchases of the identified customer.

75. The method of Claim 71, wherein determining an
incentive comprises determining an incentive based upon the
past purchases of the identified customer.

76. The method of Claim 71, wherein determining an incentive to be communicated to the identified customer comprises determining an incentive that is associated with the products.

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77. The method of Claim 71, wherein determining an incentive to be communicated to the identified customer comprises determining an incentive that is not associated with the products.

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78. The method of Claim 71, wherein communicating data relative to the incentive comprises communicating a notification of a future electronic discount to the identified customer at the point-of-sale.

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79. The method of Claim 71, wherein communicating data relative to the incentive comprises communicating data relative to the incentive to a printer located at the point-of-sale.

80. A method of coupon redemption validation of a retail store comprising:

receiving, at a computer remote from the retail store through the Internet, signals indicative of a bar code of a coupon presented by a customer, the coupon associated with a particular product;

receiving, at the computer remote from the retail store through the Internet, signals indicative of bar codes of a plurality of products purchased by the customer;

confirming by the computer that the customer purchased the product associated with the coupon; and

in response to the confirmation, automatically communicating a credit to the retail store for redemption of the coupon.

81. The method of Claim 80, wherein confirming by the computer that the customer purchased the product associated with the coupon comprises comparing the bar code of the coupon to the plurality of bar codes of the products purchased by the customer.

82. The method of Claim 80, wherein automatically communicating a credit comprises automatically transmitting an electronic mail message.

83. The method of Claim 80, wherein receiving, at a computer remote from the retail store through the Internet, signals indicative of a bar code comprises receiving at a computer remote from the retail store through the Internet, from the point-of-sale of the products, signals indicative of a bar code of a coupon presented by a customer.

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85. A method for use in marketing, comprising:
displaying the price of an item by an electronic shelf
tag at a location in a retail store proximate to the item;
providing a communication link between the electronic
shelf tag and the Internet; and

communicating, from a computer connected to the
Internet to the electronic shelf tag, the price of the item
to be displayed on the electronic shelf tag.

86. The method of Claim 85, wherein providing a
communication link comprises providing a tag controller.

87. The method of Claim 86, wherein providing a
communication link further comprises providing a radio
frequency transmitter for transmitting signals to the
electronic shelf tag.

88. The method of Claim 86, wherein providing a
communication link further comprises providing a conductive
medium between the tag controller and the electronic shelf
tag.

89. The method of Claim 85, and further comprising receiving, at the computer connected to the Internet, on a substantially real-time basis, at least one Uniform Product Code associated with a respective product purchased by a customer in the retail store, and wherein communicating, from a computer connected to the Internet to an electronic shelf tag, the price of the item to be displayed on the electronic shelf tag comprises communicating, from a computer connected to the Internet to the electronic shelf tag, the price of the item to be displayed on the electronic shelf tag in response to receiving the at least one Uniform Product Code.

90. The method of Claim 89, wherein receiving at least one Uniform Product Code comprises receiving at least one Uniform Product Code associated with at least one product competitive to the item.

91. The method of Claim 90, wherein communicating, from a computer connected to the Internet to the electronic shelf tag, the price of the item comprises communicating, from a computer connected to the Internet to the electronic shelf tag, the price of the item based on the price of the competitive product.

92. A method for use in marketing, comprising:

communicating to a retail store a reduction in the price at which a product will be sold at the retail store;

receiving, on a substantially real-time basis through the Internet, a Uniform Product Code associated with the product when the product is purchased and the price at which the product was purchased;

in response to receiving the Uniform Product Code and the price at which the product was purchased, determining a credit for the retail store to compensate the retail store for selling the product at the reduced price; and communicating the credit to the retail store.

93. The method of Claim 92, wherein communicating to a retail store a reduction in the price at which a product will be sold at the retail store comprises communicating, by a computer through the Internet, to a retail store a reduction in the price at which a product will be sold at the retail store.

94. The method of Claim 92, wherein determining a credit for the retail store comprises comparing the price at which the product was purchased to a standard price for the product.

95. The method of Claim 92, wherein communicating the credit to the retail store comprises communicating, by a computer connected to the Internet, the credit to the retail store.

96. A method for use in marketing, comprising:

receiving, at a remote computer, product purchase information of a plurality of retail stores, the product purchase information including price information, the remote computer located remote from the retail stores;

receiving, at the remote computer, a shopping list of a customer, the shopping list including a plurality of products that the customer wishes to purchase; and

in response to receiving the shopping list, communicating to the customer, by the computer, price information from each of the retail stores associated with the items on the shopping list.

97. A method for use in marketing, comprising:

receiving, at a remote computer, product purchase information of a retail store, the product purchase information including price information, the remote computer located remote from the retail stores;

receiving, at the remote computer, a shopping list of a customer, the shopping list including a plurality of products that the customer wishes to purchase;

transmitting the shopping list to a manufacturer;

receiving an incentive, from the manufacturer, for one of the products that the customer wishes to purchase; and communicating the incentive to the customer.